

**BOISE DISTRICT BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT (BLM)
RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL (RAC)
Marsing Community Center, Marsing, Idaho
May 16, 2006**

Minutes

Council Members Present: Gilbert Green (Chairman), Neil Rimbey, Richard Raymondi, John Robison, Dale Dixon, Margaret Soulen-Hinson, Patric Cudmore (am), Nate Helm (am), Grant Simonds.

Council Members Absent: Ted Howard, Donna Bennett, Brenda Richards.

BLM Advisory Present: Jerry Taylor, BD District Manager; MJ Byrne, BD RAC Coordinator.

Other BLM Staff Present: Rosemary Thomas, Four Rivers Field Office (FO) Manager; Ron Kay, Owyhee FO Manager; John Biar, Bruneau Assistant FO Manager; John Sullivan, Birds of Prey National Conservation Area Manager; Ryan Homan, Assistant Recreational Planner for the Owyhee FO.

Other: Becky Desmond, Note taker.

Statements attributed to individuals are not direct quotes unless so indicated. Titles of handouts or meeting notebook inclusions are listed in the appendix following the minutes.

COUNCIL BUSINESS, GENERAL INFORMATION, AND OPENING

REMARKS: Mr. Green (Gil) opened the meeting. He thanked Mr. Raymondi (Rick), Chairman of the RAC Subcommittee for Sage Grouse, for his hard work in producing a RAC comment on the statewide sage grouse plan before the deadline. Ms. Byrne (MJ) also thanked Mr. Raymondi and his subcommittee. The minutes of the March 22, 2006 RAC meeting were not yet certified as there was no quorum.

HOT TOPICS: Mr. Taylor (Jerry) announced the selection of David Wolf as the new associate district manager. Mr. Wolf (Dave) was one of 23 applicants. He has many years of BLM experience starting in Salmon and ending most recently with an acting manager position in the Escalante Monument area of Utah. He has a reputation for energetic and creative problem-solving, along with the ability to foster good relationships with the local people. He also has experience in budgeting and planning. Jerry said that if the Owyhee Initiative passes, Dave's experience will be invaluable.

UPCOMING ISSUES AND ACTIONS FOR WHICH BLM WILL BE SEEKING RAC'S ADVICE:

****Bruneau FO Standards and Guides using Adaptive Management Process.** Jerry discussed this first opportunity to use the adaptive management process in "moving systematically across the landscape," being able to coordinate within the NEPA process to implement change and keep a balance from year to year. He would like to use the RAC as a "sounding board" before going to the public in a process similar to the one he was involved with in Oregon. There, the Trout Creek Mountain local working group

brought a diverse group of people together to develop a broad land-use policy on an area defined by the watersheds for cutthroat trout. The plan was able to fine-tune problems at individual local areas, using reliable scientific information.

****Bruneau RMP Development.** Jerry said the RAC has been involved and will continue to be involved in this development.

****Review of Comments on Draft EIS for Birds of Prey NCA-RMP.** There is a hold on this until former Governor Dirk Kempthorne's confirmation as Secretary of the Department of the Interior. To avoid any appearance of conflict of interest, Idaho's BLM cannot put notices in the Federal Register. These notices are required for BLM meetings that may involve the public.

****R&PP and Land Exchange Requests in the Four Rivers FO.** The Four Rives RMP may be moved ahead one year because of intense pressure by developers in the foothills areas above Eagle and Boise. There are also heavy impacts from increased OHV use. More trails are being created beyond those inventoried and GPS'd. R&PP refers to "Recreation and Public Purpose Acts" which do require the NEPA process unless legislation is enacted. So far there is none, but if legislation is proposed because of growth demands, then Jerry said BLM will be in the land-use planning mode. Mr. Robison (John) commented on a recent field tour he took through the lands around Eagle. He said it was obvious the "amazing" pressure put on the area by growth and yet he said there were "remarkable resources" to be protected. He urged BLM to look at the "big picture," try to continue access to public lands, and work to control rampant OHV use.

****Route Designation in Owyhee County.** The process is continuing.

****Recreation RAC Subcommittee Re-formulation.** MJ said the national office has allowed 12 months for local RACs to set this up. She recommends that this RAC use its already existing Recreation Subcommittee to include the River Recreation group. This coming fall BLM and the Forest Service will host a workshop for river users and outfitters and guides, looking for input on how to best use the fees collected at local recreation sites. BLM and FS will report to the full RAC for approval of the plan by the first meeting of 2007. Mr. Grant Simonds (Grant) has agreed to chair this subcommittee.

Public Comments: none. Jerry added that BLM policy is for notices to go through the Federal Register for even RAC subcommittee meetings. Apparently no other federal agency is following this rule, but BLM wants full public notice and opportunity as long as its required work is not brought to a complete halt. He said any RAC-related decisions would always be made at the full RAC meetings.

BREAK

HOW TO IMPROVE RAC MEETINGS AND MAKE THEM MORE

EFFECTIVE: MJ facilitated this part of the meeting. Gil reviewed the duties of the RAC as drawn by its existing charter. There was much discussion. Basically the RAC is an advisory committee but RAC members said they do better when they have a specific task to perform rather than just "listening to reports." RAC members want more field trips, but with a purpose--such as to review the expanding pressures by developers on the foothills.

There was discussion on the definitions of “subgroup,” “subcommittee,” and “technical review teams.” There was no final agreement, but Jerry said these groups are defined by charter and RAC should follow the guidelines and definitions. He again commented that the BLM is in a dilemma regarding the rule of federal register notice for all meetings, full and subgroup, but these are on hold for Idaho, awaiting Governor Kempthorne’s appointment, and this delay could be as long as 6 to 8 months. He said key decisions MUST be made at full RAC meetings.

ACTION: MJ and Grant will research the history of the formation of the Recreation Subcommittee and send out an update to RAC members.

RAC members said they still needed information and reports from BLM staff. Jerry suggested an “issue paper” format whereby field office managers could send out information prior to the RAC meetings for members to study. Time would be provided at the end of the meetings for questions to field office managers. This process would require the time needed to write these reports but could save FO managers a whole day of sitting at RAC meetings.

ACTION: Jerry will develop this idea of “issue papers” for the next meeting.

RAC members also discussed “rules” of the meetings. The use of a facilitator was discussed, and MJ said she could act as a facilitator when that type of discussion was needed. Grant said he has had both good and bad experiences with the use of a facilitator, and recommended that sometimes a facilitator with special skills could be brought in. He also recommended that guests who have differing viewpoints be invited when controversial subjects were on the agenda. Several members thought that Mr. Dale Dixon’s (Dale) media contacts could be used to make the public more aware of RAC topics, or when a field trip might have media worth.

Other rules discussed were:

- a. Members should avoid “side” conversations during the meeting.
- b. Members should arrive on time and stay for the whole meeting.
- c. Members should avoid using their cell phones during the meeting.
- d. Members should be prepared by reading the minutes and other information sent out for their review.
- e. Agendas for the meeting should be followed. Additions to the agenda should be solicited at the beginning of the meeting.
- f. The agenda should be sent out two weeks ahead of the meetings, if possible.
- g. The minutes should be sent out earlier than they are now, so that members have a better recollection of the meeting when they read them.
- h. Members should be respectful, listen to speakers, and not interrupt. However, informal rules of discussion will be followed rather than “Robert’s Rules of Order.”
- i. Members should speak out with their opinions.
- j. Members should disclose any conflicts of interest.
- k. Meetings should start and stop on time.

I. Decisions can continue to be made using both the consensus process and majority-rules process.

ACTION: Jerry recommended that the meeting rules be sent out along with the next agenda so that RAC members can review them and keep to them.

DEVELOPMENT OF WORK PLAN FOR RAC, SUBCOMMITTEES, AND FIELD TRIPS FOR 2006: MJ again facilitated this part of the meeting and called for ideas for field trips. They are the following: Banks river improvements/float trip--June; Boise Foothills land exchange field trip--August 29th RAC meeting day, half day at the Foothills Learning Center and half day on the tour; Bruneau RMP field trip--during last two weeks of July after subgroup has met to discuss alternatives; Owyhee FO OHV route designation areas--October or November.

Jerry said the purpose of the Foothills field trip should be to establish the context of relative values being discussed in regard to possible future land exchanges. Mr. Ron Kay (Ron) said he would like the RAC's input on possible "attributes" that define where routes should go in the Owyhee Front, what vehicles should be allowed on them, and what limits there might be on them.

ACTION: Grant will check the availability of TJ Clifford and Frank Jenks for the river tour, or even for a discussion of the proposed river improvements. Ms. Soulen-Hinson (Margaret) also suggested that representatives of Idaho Department of Transportation, outfitters and guides, Forest Service, BLM, and Boise County be included.

ACTION: Dr. Neil Rimbey (Neil) will disseminate information about a workshop sponsored by the Society for Range Management, July 21 & 22, in Bear Valley (on highway to Stanley). The workshop will include a look at conditions in the grazing permit buy-out areas that occurred four years ago to improve habitat for endangered species.

ACTION: July 12 is the date for the RAC subcommittee on RMP's to meet to discuss the Bruneau RMP range of alternatives in Chapter 3. John Biar will send these to the members before the meeting. The meeting will be from 9 to 12 noon at the Boise District office. A field trip for RAC will be set at the meeting.

Discussion ensued on the possible effects that impending legislation on the Owyhee Initiative could have on BLM's RMP planning schedules. Jerry said the "unknowns" on this probable legislation are funding and implementation. He said BLM's linear planning process is hard to stop even though the Initiative could impact all the field offices and the Birds of Prey NCA. BLM is under court-ordered timetables to complete RMP tasks. BLM needs to stay involved at the local level of budgeting. Mr. John Sullivan (John Sullivan) said the Birds of Prey NCA RMP is ready to be released to the public but BLM has to wait until the moratorium on public notification through the Federal Register is lifted. This depends on Louisiana Senator Landrieu's delay of Governor Kempthorne's

Senate hearings on his nomination to be Interior Secretary, which is being held up until the Senator resolves her issue on Hurricane Katrina funding.

Grant suggested that an autumn RAC meeting in Marsing could be combined with a trip to Hemingway Butte and Fossil Creek. He would like information on how the BLM is coming up with novel solutions to multiple-use trails involving motorized, non-motorized, hiker, and equestrian use.

ACTION: Ron will send relevant information regarding the route designation process to MJ for dissemination to RAC members.

LUNCH BREAK

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS AND RELATED ISSUE PRESENTATIONS:

Rangeland Standards and Guidelines. Grant reported that agreement had been reached on water rights language in the Owyhee Initiative. The work group is continuing to finalize boundaries for wilderness areas, wild and scenic river designation, and “cherry-stem” roads. The amendment on water rights language has been signed and handed off to Senator Crapo. He summed up five years’ work by the diverse group--resulting in an agreement that involves 15 ranchers retiring grazing rights in exchange for wilderness designation in 517,000 acres, and 384 miles of wild and scenic river designation (more than double the current mileage in Idaho), along with other points in the plan.

Sage Grouse Habitat Management. Rick reported that the subcommittee had received the CD of the state sage grouse plan. It was a 300+ page plan to review in a short time, but the committee did produce a comment letter by the deadline. The letter generally asked for clarification of concepts and is included in the meeting handouts.

Off-Highway Vehicles (OHV) and Transportation Management. (Nothing further.)

River and Recreation Management. (No further discussion, but MJ provided a copy of the Frank Jenks’ slide presentation made at the March 2006 RAC meeting.)

Resource Management Plans (RMP’s). John Sullivan said the 90-day public comment period on the Birds of Prey NCA RMP will include public meetings to commence approximately 30 days after the period begins, and will also include public field trip opportunities.

Mr. John Biar (John Biar) said that Owyhee County representatives are currently reviewing the Bruneau RMP. RAC members should have the RMP by the middle of June. He hopes to have the RMP finalized by the end of this fiscal year. Jerry said at least one alternative in the range of alternatives has to analyze cumulative impacts. The “desired future conditions” must be met by all the alternatives, although at different rates. He said the basic question is whether special designation is required to “preclude irreparable harm.”

PUBLIC COMMENTS: None.

DISTRICT FIELD OFFICE AND FIRE MANAGER REPORTS:

Owyhee Field Office. Ron reported that the Silver City road repair would start in June and be completed in July. BLM supports the project, and it stays within the road’s

original footprint. He also gave a permit hearings update, saying there were four left--the others having been settled or dropped by the appellants.

Bruneau Field Office. John Biar provided a handout describing BLM's "adaptive management" process it is using for the Bruneau RMP process. There was much discussion and BLM would like RAC to review the process before its next full meeting. He said the ID team is grouping allotments in ways that make sense and will result in fewer EA's being required, for example. The process shows a "wheel of management", involving, 1) health assessments and monitoring; 2) evaluation of management effectiveness; 3) cause and effect determinations; 4) development of alternatives; NEPA analysis and decisions to implement corrective actions. Jerry believes this will be a good way to keep the public informed on each step of the way, providing BLM does a good job. Comments were favorable from RAC members, who thought the process used personnel well, allowed them into the "field," and made sensible use of staff and resources in light of shrinking budgets. This process would be repeated every 10 years.

ACTION: Jerry would like formal support of the plan from the RAC at the next full RAC meeting. John Biar will send out the range of alternatives contained in chapter three of the Bruneau RMP. BLM will "tweak" any last changes to the process and send it to RAC members before the next meeting.

ACTION: Neil asked for a report of BLM's sage grouse monitoring counts to be put on the next agenda.

Four Rivers Field Office Rosemary Thomas (Rosey) discussed the pressure on BLM for land exchange or sale to developers pursuing projects adjacent to BLM lands, with "hot spots" in the foothills north of Eagle and southeast of Boise. She provided two maps showing these growth areas. So far BLM has only listened to informal requests, but the pressure is increasing. Payette and Canyon Counties have asked to acquire public lands that would buffer county landfills and provide other public uses. The city of Eagle has applied under the Recreation and Public Purposes Act for a 2000 acre area of public lands immediately north and northwest of Eagle to be used as a regional park with an equestrian and open space emphasis. An Arizona company, M-3, is shaping an exchange proposal in that same area for development to provide up to 13,000 homes.

ACTION: Rosey will send to RAC members a map of the proposed legislated land exchange in the Boise Foothills provided by the Idaho Lands Enhancement Act.

Rosey also reported the complicated Hells Canyon Dam Complex relicensing process. This one is large, and is the first to be done under the new Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. She said six issues had to be resolved for BLM with the burden of proof falling on Idaho Power. So far, reconciliation has taken place, no hearing is scheduled, and the goal is for relicensing to take place within 14 months. However, the collaborative process still includes a yet-to-be-completed draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) with alternatives, a comment period, issuance of a final EIS, protests, a Record of Decision, and appeal periods.

BDO Fire Manager. Mr. Andy Delmus (Andy), fire manager, was away at training but passed along these words: “Tall grass/ hot days!”

PUBLIC COMMENTS: none.

REVIEW OF ACTION ITEMS AND IDENTIFICATION OF AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING: These were reviewed. The next meeting will be August 29, 2006. It will include a half-day field tour, and an afternoon meeting at the Foothills Learning Center. Details will be sent out later.

Jerry added that Nate Helm had requested a report on sage grouse habitat improvement projects before he left the meeting.

ACTION: MJ will also contact Donna Bennett about the Owyhee Sage Grouse Local Working Group’s upcoming field trip to see if it could include RAC members.

The meeting was adjourned. Minutes prepared by
Becky Desmond, Note taker.

Certified by

/S/ _____ date 9-8-06

Gilbert Green
RAC Chairman

/S/ _____ date 9-11-06

Jerry Taylor
Boise District Manager

APPENDIX

1. RAC Charter.
2. Comment letter from RAC Sage Grouse Subcommittee on state sage grouse plan.
3. RMP & Permit Renewal Process through Adaptive Management. Bruneau FO.
4. OHV Route Designation on the Owyhee Front. Paper copy. Frank Jenks.
5. Payette River Working Group, Accomplishments 2005. Paper copy. Frank Jenks.
6. Idaho Archaeology and Historic Preservation Month May 2006 brochure.
7. Maps of proposed developments in areas adjacent to BLM lands. (2) Rosemary Thomas.